1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

B. Sex in Amhara Culture.

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548 The extension of the concept of "temporary wife" to prostitution has already been touched upon in connection with the entertainment aspect of sex. It is this extension which imposes on this activity a characteristic culture pattern, involving the "unattached woman's" hoping to find another husband, and meanwhile serving transient travellers with food, shelter, and even some wifely affect. In return for this partial constraint, the culture pattern rewards the "unattached woman" prostitute with certain minimal respectability. She may actually break the curse of barrenness of a first marriage by bearing a child, and thus finding it easier to find another husband. She also has the chance to experiment in sex, learning from travellers, and teaching the local townsmen and peasants. Most terms meaning prostitute are therefore matter-of-fact, and not insulting ("shärmuta" - the most polite reference, regarded as an Arabic loanword; "gälämota"; "ämänzera" (lit. recipient of the seed); "lägärbäga" (lit. "to the whole country", public woman). However, references to "loose personality, e.g. "mäsessenya syet" are insulting.

834 A strong constraint placed on the temporary wife - prostitute, as on any other Amhara, is against her sexual intercourse with a Muslim. Infraction of this rule would bring immediate and severe ostracism. Since many of her potential clients are travelling traders, many of whom are Muslims, the temptation is strong to ignore that rule. But if she does, she can seek reinstatement in Amhara-Coptic society, which she is considered to have renounced in consummating a union with a Muslim, by appealing penitently to her confessor, who may then agree to re-baptize her, which is considered necessary.. This will lift the ban of ostracism against her, on her social level.

This religious ban against sexual intercourse with a non-Copt

834 occasionally affects non-prostitutes also. Arab traders, particularly, like to joke with Coptic Amhara women when the latter come to their stores: such as teasingly to refuse to hand over goods after purchase has been made, or, if the customer finds the price on a desired item too high, suggesting that payment might be made "another way". These fixed stores, located near the daily or Saturday markets, feature luxuries rather than what are considered necessities; e.g. sandals, tea, sugar, raisins, necklaces, imported chocolate, etc. A woman deserted by her husband, or divorced, might succumb. On the other hand, Muslim women are much more segregated from menfolk, so that there is little opportunity for an Amhara male to break the rule with a Muslim female.

836 Virginity ("denpel") is expected of girls at first marriage, which occurs about the age of 14 or 15. If she is found by the husband not to be a virgin, and he feels sure of it and insists on his rights, he can divorce her, or go to court against her kinfolk claiming damages as high as Eth$200 - 300. This is rare, however, for at that age most girls are too young to have had much opportunity for complete sexual intercourse. The courtship, apart from the above-described occasions during watch in the fields and on festives - when they are very formal -, consists of what adults condescendingly and smilingly refer to as "kidarrat", love-whisperings, considered adolescent, during which the boy and girl alternate between childish whisperings and playful hitting at each other. The term is not used for love-making of adults or married couples.

584

587 Very different is the courtship of the girl after her first divorce, which frequently occurs when her personality matures, often while she is still in her twenties. She prefers an experienced lover.

831 run to women, carrying ferns (symbolic of the vulva), and tease them with shouts of "ems anqetqet" (quivering vulva).

Polite references to sexual matters usually employ biblical terminology, requiring at least some formal, traditional education. They include such terms, wholly or partly from the old Geez language still used in liturgy, as "abalä zär" (lit. master of the seed) for male genital organs in a generic sense; "bellet" (lit. divisions) for differences between male and female sex; "akalat" (lit. part of body) for male and females, or "affärat sega" (lit. flesh of modesty).

793 831 Coptic priests are not supposed to indulge in sexual intercourse even with their wives the night before they are to officiate in church, and they therefore avoid sleeping on the same "alga" (bedstead) that night.

834 Modesty of body exposure, particularly of women, is the general pattern, though children may be barely clothed in ragged shifts leaving much skin bare (see life cycle, etc.). In fact, deliberate exposure of the body is regarded as a sign of madness, and this is the popular reaction to Western pictures of "bathing beauties" in swim suits. When bathing, persons will join members of their own sex and go to secluded places in the river. On the feast day of Temqät, (Epiphany), some rustic men strip and swim in the pool blessed by the priests, but women do not. Breasts may be visible during nursing, but if there are strangers around, they will be covered to prevent any possible evil eye from drying them up.

832 Love magic is widely and strongly believed in, particularly since it is supplied by the quasi-church functionary, the däbtära scribe. He is first called upon to write amulets, which are still respectable and, can be worn in outwardly visible containers, by women, for no one can know that the amulet is not directed against the devil. But the magic activities of the däbtära, secretly, go far beyond that.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

hold hands when talking, embrace each other when walking, and sleep in each other's arms, there seems to be neither practice nor knowledge of unsublimated homosexuality among the traditional Amhara. Boys often address one another in the feminine intimate form, and girls sometimes use the masculine form among themselves or call each other "brother," without having their own sexual identities in the least confused thereby. Amhara males, in particular, have a proud cult of virility, though it is not compulsive in the sense that they must boast of sexual conquests; to talk of sexual exploits in front of others in such a manner would be a great shame, and such matters are simply taken in one's stride. (The other side of masculinity, physical courage, is the subject of a great deal of boasting. The term for masculinity, *wandnat*, is synonymous with *guabaznat*, or "bravery.")

The advent of puberty therefore makes the young Amhara simply more self-conscious about the characteristics proper to his or her sex. Girls begin to groom themselves and think of finer clothes. Boys proudly take on a "man's share" of the work; and, what is more, become somewhat unruly, tempestuous, quick to pick fights, and vaunt their new powers. The *goramsā* often carries a special kind of *dulā* that is symbolic of his youthful masculinity. Unusually short, stout, and hard, it is convenient for concealing beneath his clothes when he goes out at night on sexual adventures, and dangerous enough to convince himself that he is quite brave. As soon as conditions permit, adolescents of both sexes enter their first marriage with alacrity.

With respect to psychosocial identity, the situation is slightly more complex, in that Abyssinian society does provide a variety of social roles for its males. For the most part, boys faithfully follow the examples of their fathers. This is true in the case of noblemen, priests, traders, and artisans, as well as for the great peasant majority concerning whom the following remarks are presented.

The pattern of peasant life is broad enough to fit the dispositions of most of those who are called on to continue it. The typical Amhara adolescent boy therefore seeks no more in life than to be given a pretty wife whose father has a lot of land, to work so well that his father will be generous in giving him land and cattle when he marries, to produce abundant grain so he can eat plenty, and to become renowned in the land as an outstanding litigant.

Under certain conditions, however, this pattern may not fit. The reason may be chiefly economic: too many siblings and too little land in the family may force him to seek some other livelihood. Or it may have to do primarily with resentment with his lot under an especially rigid and unkind father. Still another motive may lie in the boy's yearning for a more suitable identity.

Whatever the reasons for his marginality may have been, the adolescent boy in traditional Abyssinia could respond to such a situation by pursuing

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

brides be virgin. Related norms greatly restrict their quest for romantic love. Since Ethiopian society still expects its maidens to be shy and retiring, and to avoid social relations with boys outside their families, the boys find few opportunities for getting to know members of the opposite sex. Even in those few situations where sociability between the sexes is publicly permitted, ingrained tendencies to segregate the sexes persist. The most liberal context for such sociability, the University College campus, has witnessed relatively little interaction between male and female students. In spite of their occasional resolutions to act more boldly, the college boys have in the past tended to shy away from the co-eds except during such rare formal events as a college dance or off-campus parties.

This is not to say that modern adolescent males have no opportunity for premarital sexuality. On the contrary, their opportunities in this regard are perhaps better than ever. The proliferation of brothels in Ethiopia's urban centers makes sexual initiation easy, almost a routine event.* Students also frequent these houses for social entertainment, dancing to swing and Latin rhythms, and sipping beer or soft drinks. Thus the continued sanctions against social intercourse in more respectable forms work to sharpen the Amhara dichotomy between decency and sexuality, and leave modern boys with a double standard that separates the marriageable girls from the enjoyable ones.

The idea that marriage should be founded on romantic love has brought greater anxiety as well as hope into the lives of Ethiopian adolescents. This anxiety is due in part to the above-mentioned inhibitions against that easy commerce of the sexes which so facilitates the discovery of a suitable love object. It also reflects a certain ambivalence toward the new ideal, based on a lingering attachment to the authority of the old system. This was manifest, for example, in the response to a college debate on the topic, "Resolved: that the custom of letting the parents choose a spouse for the children should be maintained," that took place in 1959. Although on anonymous questionnaires *90 per cent* of the college students said they will probably decide whom to marry themselves, and only 3 per cent said the decision would be made by parents or other relatives, in voting on the matter after the debate the students (in contrast to the judges who awarded the negative debaters) publicly declared themselves 42 per cent affirmative, 41 per cent negative, with 17 per cent abstaining.

Anxiety regarding the new conception of marriage, finally, is also connected with a new-fashioned fear of divorce. The mind of the modern adolescent vacillates between the ideal of an abiding marital relationship based on

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* Due perhaps to the greater importance of their peers, sexual accomplishments have now become a frequent topic of conversation and a matter for boasting among modern adolescent boys.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

571 returnees has generally been sympathetic, and some of them have been quite
565 helpful to individuals or groups of students during their hard pressed days
178 as students abroad. The situation of action, however, has kept their degree
[829] of support of the returnees to a minimum. Three patterns of elder-returnee relations can be discerned: (1) The elder is concerned above all to maintain his position and, hence, to defend himself against any encroachment on his power on the part of younger people. This type has resorted to the various techniques of court politics—false rumors, libelous accusations, etc.—in order to check the influence of the returnees and have the more reformist among them transferred to less favorable positions. (2) The elder believes that if anything is to be accomplished in Ethiopia, it must be done by the educated young people, but he must be cautious in supporting the latter, for fear of getting into trouble at the palace himself if he offends any entrenched interests. Even when a returnee has been able to get the support of such a man for some reform, he may find when the time for implementation comes that his supporter has been transferred and left no commitment in writing for his successor. (3) While generally sympathetic to the returnees, this type fears the rashness and inexperience of youth and feels itself threatened by the prospect of being displaced. His apprehension is not aggressively expressed, but tends to take the form of discrediting the returnees by blaming them for every possible mistake. Whether due to the antagonism, caution, or ambivalence of the new nobility, the returnees have found relatively little effective support for their projected reforms. The ministers typically have shown them a progressive face and just as often have pursued a stagnant policy.

571 Vocational malaise and ideological uncertainty thus reinforce each other.
581 The cycle of frustration is complete when we consider the marital problems
584 of the returnee, which revolve about the difficulty of getting to know poten-
178 tial spouses, financial handicaps, the changing definition of marriage, and
[562] latent warfare between the sexes in the modernizing sector.

571 Except for a small number of returnees whose marriages have had to be
584 arranged ones because of political considerations, the foreign-educated men,
• 834 and a few of the women, are determined to choose their own spouses. Getting
178 to know a potential spouse, however, remains a difficult matter. The traditional mores prevail with regard to social relationships between the sexes. A girl who goes out with boys is *ipso facto* presumed to have a bad character, and many of the girls in whom a returnee might be interested are not permitted to go out by their parents. There are few places where a young man and woman can go together and have privacy. Those who attempt to follow the Western custom of dating have been embarrassed.

585 The cost of marriage presents another obstacle. The quality of housing that
511 a returnee aspires to for his potential family is far beyond his means in the
571 present-day economy. Other assumed necessities—an automobile, expensive

751 758 the sunlight.[6] After the disease symptoms have disappeared, and the convalescent has regained his former vitality, some precautions may still be followed to prevent the return of the original syndrome, to which he [262] may have developed a vulnerability. For example, the former sickman may be forbidden to eat one or more of the foodstuffs which were included among the materia [978] medica of his cure. Often, an amulet containing dried materia medica of the primary medicine is also worn.

*278 Pharmacological Combinations. In the abstract, Amhara pharmacology can be considered as a corpus of discrete and varied instructions for a) conserving the latent healing power of botanicals, and b) converting this power into therapeutically effective agents. Seen from this perspective, Amhara pharmacolog y has the potential for a large number of logically possible combinations of instructions, ranging from those with few directions of any kind, to combinations with elaborate instructions in each pharmacological category. Although, empirically, Amhara herbal therapies probably fall short of the potential number of combinations, the combinations charac-

[757] [834] [6]Primary syphilis, in particular, sets elaborate requirements---the removal of all hair from the body, head, and face; in addition, there is a period of abstinence from coitus.